

Message Text

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21

ACTION EA-09

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FM AMCONSUL MELBOURNE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3017

INFO AMEMBASSY CANBERRA

AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON

AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

CINCPAC

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CINCPAC FOR POLAD

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TAGS ELAB, AS

SUBJ: TRAVEL PLANS OF ROBERT HAWKE, PRESIDENT ACTU

1. LABATT WAS ADVISED OCT 14 THAT BOB HAWKE, PRESIDENT OF THE ACTU, HAD CABLED PRESIDENT GEORGE MEANY OF AFL-CIO THAT HE WAS NOW PLANNING NOT TO ATTEND REGIONAL ICFTU CONFERENCE IN MEXICO AND THEREFORE WOULD NOT BE COMING TO WASHINGTON DURING OCTOBER FOR TENTATIVELY PLANNED MEETING WITH MEANY. INSTEAD, HAWKE PLANS TO VISIT WASHINGTON ABOUT NOV 7 JUST BEFORE ILO GOVERNING BODY MEETING AND ILO COMMITTEE MEETING SCHEDULED FOR WEEK OF NOV 10.

2. COMMENT: GIVEN PRESENT UNCERTAIN POLITICAL SITUATION IN AUSTRALIA, HAWKE'S ACTION IS HARDLY SURPRISING. THERE IS NOW HIGH PROBABILITY OF ELECTION, PROBABLY IN DECEMBER WHICH, IN LABATT'S OPINION, MAKES DOUBTFUL THAT HAWKE WILLBE ABLE TO KEEP TO NOV SCHEDULE DURING ELECTION CAMPAIGN IN WHICH HE WILL BE INEVITABLY INVOLVED AS PRESIDENT OF LABOR PARTY.

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3. HOWEVER, THERE IS OUTSIDE POSSIBILITY THAT HAWKE MAY USE NOVEMBER TRIP AS EXCUSE TO DISASSOCIATE HIMSELF FROM CAMPAIGN WHICH NOW APPEARS DISASTROUS FOR HIS PARTY. HAWKE HAS TRACK RECORD OF BEING ABSENT FROM PARTY PROBLEM PERIODS WHICH COME ABOUT IN SPITE OF HIS OPPOSITION TO PRIME MINISTER'S ACTIONS WHICH HAVE CAUSED THEM. FOR EXAMPLE, DURING RECENT BASS BY-ELECTION, WHICH WAS ABSOLUTE DEBACLE FOR LABOR PARTY, HAWKE ATTENDED ILO SESSION AND TOOK PRIVATE VACATION INSTEAD OF INVOLVING HIMSELF IN TASMANIAN ELECTION CRISIS PRECIPITATED BY PRIME MINISTER WITHOUT HAWKE'S CONCURRENCE.

4. LABATT FORWARDS THIS BACKGROUND AND CONJECTURE IN EVENT DEPT HAS ENQUIRY FROM AFL-CIO AS HAWKE'S CABLE TO MEANY WAS SPARSELY WORDED AND COULD BE MIS-INTERPRETED. HAWKE FEELS DEEPLY ABOUT NEED TO DISCUSS ILO MATTERS WITH MEANY AND WILL DELAY ITS HAPPENING ONLY UNDER EXTREME PRESSURE.
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